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ABSTRACT

This report presents an analysis of information about the teaching styles used by parents of children enrolled in the Queensland Preschool Correspondence Program in Australia. Structured interviews conducted with a sample of 47 mothers in their own homes provided the basis for analysis and categorization of teaching styles. Interviews cover such topics as demographic information; parents' views of their own roles as teachers and their expectations for their children; how parents presented the program to their children; parental attitudes and practices related to child rearing, and the types of resources and teaching materials parents found helpful. Specific tables and data illustrating outcomes of the interviews are included. In all families the mother was found to be completely responsible for her child's preschool correspondence program. Appendices include a copy of the questionnaire used in the parent interview, and 13 supplementary tables. (CM)

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No. 7 in a series on the evaluation
of the Queensland Pre-School Correspondence Program

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ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHING STYLES OF A SAMPLE OF PARENTS ENROLLED IN THE PRE-SCHOOL CORRESPONDENCE PROGRAM PART 1 - PARENT INTERVIEWS

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INTRODUCTION

In an educational correspondence program directed to pre-school children aged four to six years, the role of the child's parents is critical. An analysis of parents' perceptions and judgements of the program has previously been presented in McGaw, Ashby and Grant (1975). While several other aspects of both the operation and effects of the Pre-School Correspondence Program (P.S.C.P.) have been examined in various reports in the *Evaluation Series* it was considered necessary to initiate a more searching examination of the home teaching process.

Two basic questions are involved in this issue. First, what are the ways various parents undertake the business of teaching particular units of material to their own children in the home situation? Second, what types of materials are likely to provide the necessary inputs to assist parents carrying out the home teaching role? Both of these options open up a range of complex issues. For example, the first question moves directly into the area of teaching styles and strategies. Recent literature on research into teaching styles has concentrated on how learning takes place or what the social setting for learning is, rather than what is learned. Research into the social setting which was most comparable to the investigation of the P.S.C.P. was that of Gordon, (1969) and Gordon and Jester, (1970). In these projects the mother was given tasks to teach and observations were made of the behaviour setting and her role as teacher. In these projects observers investigated the verbal behaviour of adults in the home as well as their educational attitudes. One conclusion reached was that audio-visual recording equipment should be used in future to permit finer analysis of teaching behaviours.

Some reviews of research into teaching indicated that pre-school research had not previously been concerned with the explication of the interaction between teacher and pupil behaviour so as to provide specific transactional relationships (Reshid, 1969). Several studies yielded data on teaching behaviour, but not on the interaction between teacher behaviour and pupil behaviour (Reichanberg-Hachett, 1962). Others acquired data on teachers' behaviour and supplemented it with an analysis of their attitudes gained by way of interviews. A relationship was found between the amount of mothers' positive verbal behaviour and the performance levels of pre-school children (Gordon & Jester, 1970).

Parent-child and teacher-child relationships are a complex mix of many elements and most observation schedules have only focused on a small portion of the process. Future studies were advised (Soar, 1970) to use multivariate observational systems and analyses with the aid of audio-visual recording instruments that would prove more reliable than trained observers.

It should be noted, however, that in spite of the progress that has been made in analysing the teaching styles of parents, results to date do not yet permit accurate predictions to be made concerning the likely occurrence of any particular style. More particularly, nothing is presently known of the range of styles likely to be found among parents of pre-school aged children enrolled in the Pre-School Correspondence Program.

The design which was subsequently adopted for the present project involved analyses using many variables of parents' teaching styles concentrating on parental background variables and educational attitudes assessed by way of interviews. Information on the behaviour setting, parents' role as teacher and the transactional process occurring between teacher and learner was collected by way of audio-visual recording equipment. This was later analysed after the finalisation of the classification categories.

The absence of even preliminary data concerning the occurrence and frequency of particular styles among Queensland parents make decisions concerning the provision of appropriate materials at best presumption but at worst ill-conceived. Yet clearly there is a close relationship between teaching styles and the materials. Further, the impetus given by earlier findings of the evaluation project resulted in greater emphasis being given to individualising the program by the unit-based teaching staff involved in the P.S.C.P. A direct outcome of these efforts was the expressed need for more information about how parents actually set about teaching in the home situation.

On this basis it was decided to undertake an investigation into parents' teaching methods. A two-phased approach was devised: first, the gathering of certain social and related data about the demographic characteristics of the enrolled population, their perceptions of required inputs to assist in this process and their judgements concerning the process of teaching within the home (interviews conducted within the home situation were to acquire this information); and second, the analysis of parents' performance with respect to a number of selected teaching tasks similar in character to those encountered with the P.S.C.P. but using unfamiliar materials (these performances were to be analysed from video-taped recordings made within the home).

The purpose of this report is to present information relating to the outcomes of the interviews conducted with parents. Analysis of parents' teaching performances is presented in a separate report. (Grant, Ashby, & Clemesha 1978).

PARENT INTERVIEW

Structured interviews were conducted with a sample of parents in their own homes. The general framework of the interview and topics covered is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Topics in Parent Interview

Demographic Information

1. Child Sex
2. Child's Age
3. Number of Children in Family
4. Birth Order of Children
5. Age of Mothers
6. Mothers' Education
7. Mothers' Occupation
8. Age of Father
9. Fathers' Education
10. Fathers' Occupation
11. Language Spoken
12. Parents' Correspondence Education

View of Own Role

1. Description of own role
2. View of role expected by teacher
3. Confidence in teaching
4. Ways parents cater for child
5. View of way teacher caters for child
6. Influence of area facilities on role

Program Presentation

1. Method used to present topics
2. Plan of presentation
3. Reasons for difficulties
4. Consequent actions

Child-Rearing Attitudes

1. Knowledge goals for child
2. Concerns for child
3. Methods of discipline
4. Methods of showing approval
5. Frequency and type of reading
6. Family Communication patterns
7. Attitudes towards play
8. Expectation of school success

Resource Material Preferences

1. Children's preferred illustrations
2. Parents' preferred area for extra materials
3. Medium preferred for materials

A copy of the questionnaire is set out in Appendix 1. Aside from general social background information, parents were asked to talk about their teaching role, aspects of program presentation and about a number of their attitudes and practices related to child rearing. Further parts of the structured interview comprised the assessment of parents' need for help in teaching areas and their selection of relevant resource teaching materials.

Each sample family received two visits which were separated by a minimum of four days. The interview was conducted at the beginning of the first visit as it was designed to act as an "ice-breaker" between parents and research personnel. The later sessions involved the audio and video taping of parent-child interactions. The interview was usually of one hour's duration except when there were unscheduled interruptions by family members.

Usually the mother was the only parent present at the interview but when both parents were present, only the mother's comments were recorded because it was found that in each case she was wholly responsible for her child's pre-school correspondence program.

For the assessment of parents' need for help in teaching areas, sample resource materials were presented to parents so that they could choose the areas in which they would like the information to be available. Children were also shown a range of illustrative materials from which they were asked to select the most appealing presentation, then to select the next most appealing presentation from the remaining pictures, and so on, until their first three preferences were known. These data were then analysed to reveal any correlations between important variables such as children's sex and how frequently mothers read to their children.

SAMPLE SELECTION

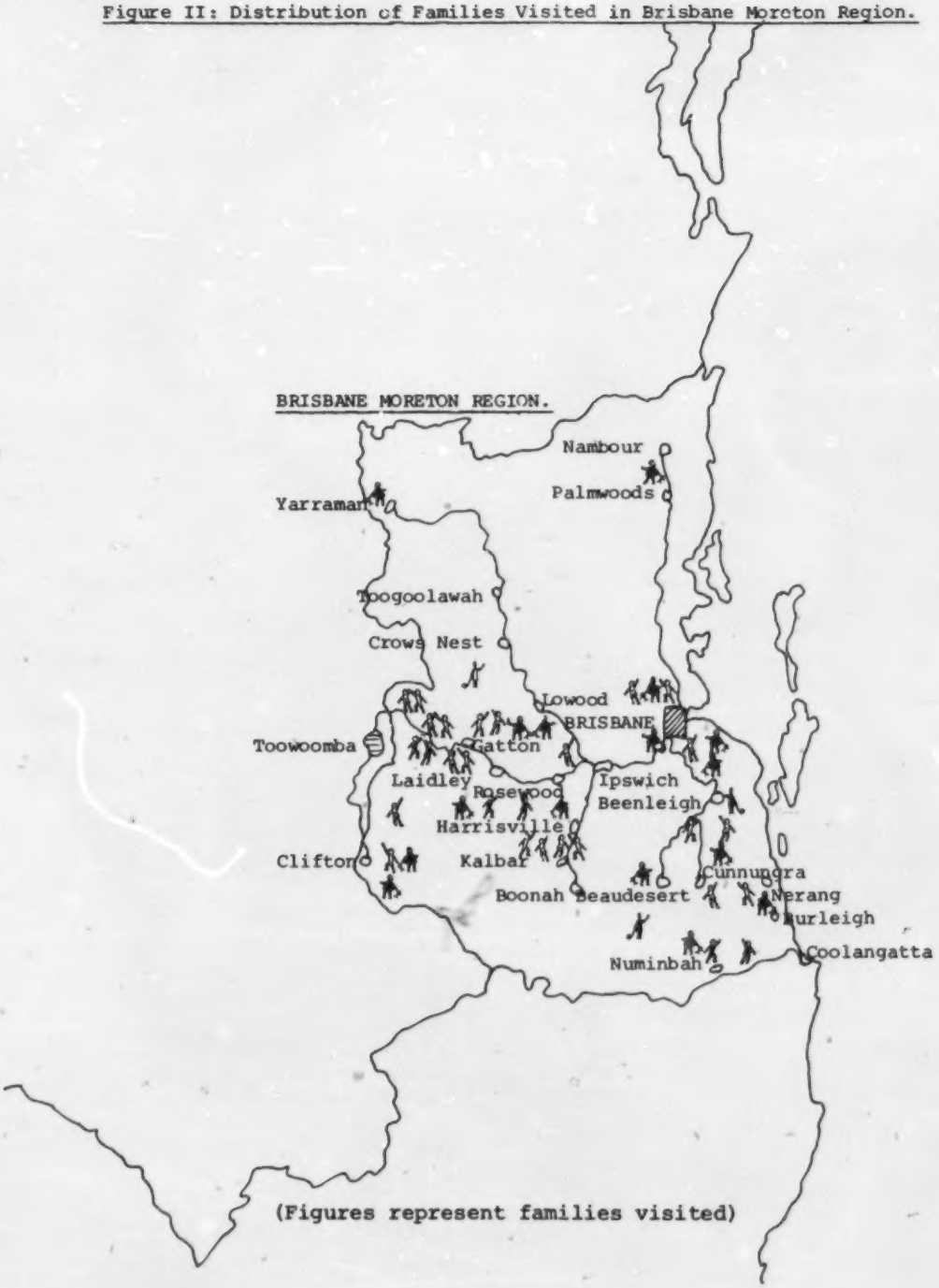
For overall planning, development and co-ordination purposes the State of Queensland is divided into a number of statistical regions. The most populous of these regions is the Brisbane Moreton Region. This region comprises only 2.1 per cent of the land area of the State (see Figure I) but 57.3 per cent of the total population. Brisbane Moreton region with a population of one million people is comprised of the metropolitan area and other areas quite different from it (see Figure II). The survey region extended some 160 km north through pineapple, sugar cane and dairying areas to Nambour and north-west to the Brisbane Valley beef cattle area. It also reached 128 km west to Gatton with its small crop irrigation farming and south-west in the dairy cattle areas. To the south the area went as far as 144 km to include the Numinbah Valley where beef cattle are predominant.

It was decided to draw the sample of families (and therefore of parents) from this region rather than draw a State-wide sample for three reasons. First, of the 770 families enrolled State-wide in the pre-school correspondence program, 87, 11.3 per cent, lived within the Moreton region. Second, an analysis of earlier data showed that there were no significant differences with respect to the occurrence and frequencies of age groups and educational levels between those living in the Moreton region and those living elsewhere in the State. Third, and following closely on the previous two arguments, the proximity of families to the Brisbane headquarters of the evaluation project had major practical advantages. As each family was to be visited twice, travel time was an important consideration. Further, the fact that video equipment, which can have a high failure rate in field situations, was to be used, meant that there were advantages in being able to exchange units quickly if any malfunction occurred.

A total of 50 families, 57.5 per cent of the Brisbane Moreton enrolments were selected for interview in the study. A completely randomised selection procedure ensured that every family living in this region had an equal chance of selection. Subsequently, following an initial approach 47 agreed to participate. Results presented in this report are based upon data for these 47 families.

Figure I: Queensland's Statistical Regions

Figure II: Distribution of Families Visited in Brisbane Moreton Region.



PROFILE OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Age Data

Over half the children in the sample, 57.5 per cent, were aged between four years six months and five years. A further 40.4 per cent were aged over five years one month. This distribution is similar to that found in Queensland State Pre-School Centres and typical of enrolments in the P.S.C.P.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Children

Age Range of Children	Number	Per cent
Under 4 yrs 6 mths	1	2.1
4 yrs 6 mths to 5 yrs 0 mths	27	57.5
5 yrs 1 mth to 5 yrs 6 mths	18	38.3
Over 5 yrs 6 mths	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

To be eligible for entry to either a pre-school centre or to the P.S.C.P. in Queensland a child must be at least four years of age. Compulsory schooling begins from five to six years of age. In practice, however, children enter primary schooling before they are six and thus pre-schooling tends to relate to the year immediately prior to admission to primary school.

Other data relating to the children in the sample are presented in Appendix II: Supplementary Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Parents' age data is set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Parents

Age Range	Mothers		Fathers	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Under 25	3	6.4	0	0
26 to 30	16	34.0	13	27.7
31 to 35	18	38.3	18	38.3
36 to 40	8	17.1	10	21.3
41 to 45	2	4.2	4	8.5
Over 45	0	0	2	4.2
Totals	47	100.0	47	100.0

As a group, mothers were found to be a few years younger than their husbands so that only mothers are represented in the under 25 year age group while only fathers are represented in the over 45 year age group. By far the majority of parents, 72.3 per cent of mothers and 66 per cent of fathers, were within the 26 to 35 year age range.

Educational Levels

Overall, it was found that mothers in the sample tended to have undertaken slightly more years of formal education than fathers. Mothers have already been shown to be a slightly younger group than fathers and thus this difference in participation in schooling may reflect changing social patterns. However, the differences were not found to be significant.

Table 4: Parents' Educational Levels

Educational Level*	Mothers		Fathers	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Primary Incomplete	1	2.1	1	2.1
Primary Complete	16	34.0	23	48.9
Junior Complete	20	42.6	17	36.2
Senior Complete	4	8.5	2	4.3
Tertiary Qualification	6	12.8	4	8.5
Totals	47	100.0	47	100.0

* Primary education covers the first seven years of formal schooling.
Junior and Senior are the tenth and twelfth years respectively.
Tertiary education begins after Senior.

As can be seen from Table 4, the largest single group of 20 mothers, 42.6 per cent, completed ten years of formal education while the largest single group of 23 fathers, 48.9 per cent, completed seven years of formal education. Only ten parents, six mothers and four fathers, had any tertiary education.

Few parents, eight mothers and five fathers, had any of their own education by way of correspondence. Table 5 sets out the number of years' experience which each of these parents had spent enrolled in such programs.

Table 5: Parents' Correspondence Education

Number of Years	Mothers		Fathers	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
None	39	83.0	42	89.4
One	4	8.5	2	4.3
Two	3	6.4	1	2.1
Three	1	2.1	1	2.1
Four	0	0	0	0
Five	0	0	1	2.1
Totals	47	100.0	47	100.0

Range of Occupations

In each case, the pre-school children visited in this sample were taught by their mother-teacher. This is typical of the P.S.C.P. with only a small proportion of families employing a governess or home supervisor (also typically female) to supervise the teaching of children. However it is interesting to note the mother's description of her present occupation as given in Table 6.

Table 6: Mothers' Present Occupations

Occupation	Number	Per cent
Housewife	29	61.7
Housewife and Professional	2	4.3
Housewife and Clerical and Sales	4	8.5
Housewife and Farmer	5	10.6
Housewife and Unskilled	7	14.9
Total	47	100.0

Most mothers, 61.7 per cent, indicated that they were fully occupied with the workload of a housewife, the remaining 39.3 per cent linked housewife with some other additional occupation. It should be noted however, that of the 12 mothers who indicated they worked as a farmer or unskilled worker most were in fact involved in the running of their own family property. This reflects a tendency in the rural section to employ the family workforce to operate farms – a tendency no doubt brought about by economic factors affecting rural industries. The extent of such involvement in running the family property is not known. Naturally there was little relationship between mothers' present occupations and those engaged in prior to marriage. The following table shows both mothers' occupations before marriage and fathers' present occupations.

Table 7: Distribution of Main Occupation held by Parents

Occupation	Mothers		Fathers	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Professional	9	19.1	6	12.8
Clerical and Sales	20	42.6	2	4.2
Skilled	4	8.5	4	8.5
Farmer	0	0	29	61.7
Semi-Skilled	3	6.4	3	6.4
Unskilled	11	23.4	3	6.4
Totals	47	100.0	47	100.0

The distribution of mothers' and fathers' occupational classifications differed markedly. The largest single group of 20 mothers, 42.6 per cent, worked in clerical and sales occupations whereas this occupation accounted for the smallest number of fathers. Similarly, while no mothers classified themselves as having been farmers before marriage, the largest group of 29 fathers, 61.7 per cent, recorded this as their occupation.

Farming was the predominant employment of males in the isolated areas visited. Even other occupations classified as professional and semi-skilled were often concerned with rural activities, eg. drilling contractor, contract clearer, and agricultural economist.

Other Family Characteristics

Other information on the pre-school children and their families such as the distribution of the number of children in families, the languages spoken by parents, and other facts can be found in Appendix II: Supplementary Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLE IN THE P.S.C.P.

The teaching staff of the Pre-School Correspondence Unit have provided firm evidence of the importance they give to the teaching role of parents involved in the P.S.C.P. (Grant, Ashby & Clemesha, 1978). Various reports have also indicated that parents view this role with some ambivalence (McGaw, Ashby, & Grant 1975). The fact that most parents are only involved in the program for one-year periods at a time highlights the importance of unit based teachers being able to quickly provide appropriate guidance and suggestions to parents who may feel uncomfortable in a teaching role. However, this calls for quite precise information about the kinds of feelings that parents, but especially mothers, have towards the parent-teacher role. Thus a question was asked to determine the part parents see themselves playing in their own child's education by correspondence. Responses to this question are set out in Table 8.

Table 8: Mothers' Perception of Role in Program

Role Perception	Number	Per cent
Teacher	21	44.7
Teachers'/Child's aide	13	27.7
Liaison between teacher and child	5	10.6
Mother simply doing program	8	17.0
Total	47	100.0

Only 21 mothers, 44.7 per cent, perceived themselves as having the role of 'teacher' in the program. Although this represented the largest single group of mothers it still left 26 parents, 55.3 per cent, who preferred to be assigned a role of aide, liaison between home and unit or simply to be regarded as mothers working on the program with their children.

Within the program there is a heavy reliance on mothers to fulfil various teaching duties. Thus it is desirable that mothers feel confident in the role of teacher. In fact it was found that 12 of the 47 mothers, 25.5 per cent, said they were not confident in their ability to teach their own child.

These data relating to mothers' confidence levels were further analysed in an attempt to identify those factors which may be involved in shaping attitudes towards teaching ability.

Table 9 shows that mothers' confidence in teaching is statistically related to mothers' occupation before marriage at the .05 level of significance.

Table 9: Mothers' Occupation before Marriage by Mothers' Confidence in Teaching

Mothers' Confidence in Teaching	Mothers' Occupation Before Marriage: Professional & Skilled		Semi-Skilled & Unskilled		Totals	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Lack of Confidence	5	11.1	6	13.3	11	24.4
Confident	28	62.3	6	13.3	34	75.6
Totals	33	73.4	12	26.6	45	100.0

χ^2 (1) = 5.77 $p < .05$

Of the 12 mothers who had held semi-skilled or unskilled jobs 50 per cent were confident and the remaining 50 per cent were not confident in teaching. Of the 33 mothers who had held professional or skilled positions, 84.8 per cent of mothers were confident of teaching while only 15.2 per cent were not. Thus, mothers who have had professional or skilled occupations prior to marriage are far more likely to feel confident about teaching their children than mothers who have had semi-skilled or unskilled occupations. It should be noted, however, that this result may depend less upon the actual occupation as such than upon those kinds of qualities and attitudes that are developed as result of such things as training, acceptance of responsibility or confidence in oneself, instilled by acknowledgement of competence. Table 10 takes this rather further and shows that mothers' confidence in their teaching ability is related to the type of additional information and materials selected to assist with teaching tasks.

Table 10: Mothers' Confidence in Teaching by her 1st Choice of Extra Materials Wanted

Parents' 1st Choice of Extra Materials Wanted	Not Confident		Confident		Totals	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Child Development and Cognitive Development Information	10	21.7	20	43.5	30	65.2
Activity Development and Practical Equipment	1	2.2	15	32.6	16	34.8
Totals	11	23.9	35	76.1	46	100.0

χ^2 (1) = 4.2 $p < .05$

Within the interview parents were invited to give their preferences for additional materials from a range of examples. The range included the following categories: information on child development, information on cognitive development (of the child), information concerning the development of various activities, and the provision of specific information about specific practical activities. In addition, parents were free to link two or more of these categories together or to treat all equally.

When selecting preferences for additional information and materials, 90.0 per cent of mothers who were not confident selected information on children's cognitive and physical development. A majority of mothers who were confident of their teaching ability, 57.1 per cent, also chose developmental information as being needed but a significantly large portion of mothers, 42.9 per cent, named their first choice as activity development information and practical equipment.

Thus, a significantly larger proportion of mothers who were confident in their teaching ability chose extra teaching materials in the areas of activity development than mothers who were not confident.

Perceived Influences on Teaching Style

One of the most important facets of research in this part of the total evaluaton of the P.S.C.P. is the investigation of parents' teaching styles. Although the analysis of parents teaching styles is to be dealt with in detail in a subsequent report (Grant, Ashby and Clemesha 1978), certain aspects of this topic were canvassed in the interviews held with parents. Mothers were asked to identify any influences which they believed had affected their teaching styles. Parents were also questioned about the influence, if any, which their involvement in organisations or with other persons may have had.

However, before examining this matter further it will be useful to review the extent to which parents had access to various types of community facilities and organisations. Table 11 provides this information.

Table 11: Availability of Community Facilities

Facility	Not Present		Present and Used		Present and Not Used		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Pre-School	32	68.1	9	19.1	6	12.8	47	100.0
Kindergarten	31	66.0	9	19.1	7	14.9	47	100.0
Playgroup	25	53.2	20	42.5	2	4.3	47	100.0
Library	23	48.9	17	36.2	7	14.9	47	100.0
School	19	40.4	23	49.0	5	10.6	47	100.0

The facility most used by families were the local primary schools. A total of 23 families, 49 per cent, indicated that they availed themselves of local school facilities. When asked if the contact with the school influenced their own teaching, ten mothers replied in the affirmative. More specifically, six mentioned that they used the schools' equipment, books and activities for teaching purposes while the other four said that the experiences of older children at school provided the mother with a model of what would be expected of their child in Year One at primary school. This latter source of influence, of course, can be quite subtle in that it is based upon indirect perceptions and is substantially affected by the particular school teacher who is the source of the influence.

Twenty families indicated that they attended a playgroup, but only eight parents said their involvement had influenced the way they taught their children. Four of these gained ideas for activities from this involvement while the remaining four found that their ability to discuss problems with the other mothers who attended had influenced their teaching ability.

The extent to which other community facilities, namely pre-schools, kindergartens and libraries, influenced mothers' teaching can be ascertained by way of reference to tables 5, 6, and 7 to be found in Appendix II: Supplementary Tables.

Other sources of influence were mentioned by 28, 59.6 per cent, of mothers. These included references to specific experiences, persons or other mediums, which they believed had affected their teaching style. Responses are categorised in Table 12.

Table 12: Other Influences on Mothers' Teaching Styles

Influence	Number	Percent
None other than own direction, other children	19	40.4
Mother's own upbringing	4	8.5
Mother's own school experience	6	12.8
Past job experience	4	8.5
Influence of other person, organisation (Deaf Pre-School)	7	14.9
Influence of media – T.V., literature	7	14.9
Total	47	100.0

One group of seven parents had been influenced by media such as television and literature and a second group of the same number of parents was influenced by a significant other person such as a father-in-law or teacher.

A further 14 parents indicated that their own past home experiences, school, or job had affected the teaching methods which they employed with their children. The remaining 19 parents, 40.4 per cent, either replied that they knew of no specific influence or that their practices had resulted from trial and error experiences with their own older children.

Attitudes Towards Aspects of Teaching

Teaching is one aspect of parenting which commences when the child is born and remains constant throughout the period of the child's dependency. As the child becomes older it appears to become increasingly difficult for a number of parents to regard themselves as teachers of their children, and even more difficult to maintain their self-confidence. There appear to be various stages involved in the process of parenting. Certainly the earlier of these stages present unique problems. At the pre-school level of early childhood the difficulties are considerable. Parents have been impressed by the media, and especially the women's weekly papers, that the critical nature of the pre-school stage is critical for subsequent development.

Mothers who enrolled their pre-school children in the Pre-School Correspondence Program found that the unit-based teachers expected them to be the child's "parent-teacher" and to actively engage in teaching activities. Naturally in any diversified group of people reactions may be expected to vary considerably in terms of confidence, ability to fulfil expectations and instructional methods employed.

During the course of the parent interviews mothers were asked in what ways they found being parent and teacher affected their ability to cater for the needs of their child. The answers revealed both positive and negative effects.

Table 13: Perceived Effect of Being Parent and Teacher

Effect	Number	Per cent
Disadvantage child inattentive	5	10.6
Can give individual attention	9	19.2
Can use knowledge of child	17	36.2
Unrestricted time and activities at home	11	23.4
Parents gain insight into child's experiences	5	10.6
Total	47	100.0

The number of parents who perceived positive effects of being both parent and teacher far outweighed the number who found this to be an undesirable combination. Nevertheless, 5 parents, 10.6 per cent of the total sample, maintained that it was a disadvantageous situation because the child was inattentive – the cause of this was not investigated.

Of the remaining 42 parents, the largest single group of 17 mothers, 36.2 per cent, regarded the main positive effect as being that they were able to use their knowledge of their child to help individualise their teaching. A further 11 mothers, 23.4 per cent, mentioned that because they were the child's parent as well as teacher they had an unrestricted time schedule in which to cover topics to be dealt with in the P.S.C.P. and that they could draw upon the full resources of the home environment for teaching activities. Other effects are set out in the Table 11.

Parents were also asked how they scheduled pre-school activities into their daily commitments.

Table 14: Parents' Pre-School Presentation Plan

Presentation Schedule	Number	Per cent
In conjunction with home routine	26	55.3
Plan Pre-School for certain days	14	29.8
Planned times and with home routine	7	14.9
Total	47	100.0

The majority of parents, 55.3 per cent, engaged in pre-school activities in conjunction with their home routine. Parents found that in many situations a topic or concept in the program could be well-covered by practically applying it to some task at hand in the home. It should be noted that one specific outcome of an earlier report in this present series (McGaw, Ashby and Grant, 1975) was the decision to ask unit-based teachers to help parents find ways of incorporating P.S.C.P. topics into daily routines related to household chores.

Another method used by 14 parents, 29.8 per cent, involved planning ahead certain days or times in which only pre-school activities would be carried out. The remaining seven parents combined the above two methods.

When asked how they proceeded when extending discussion topics, it was found that 21 parents, 44.6 per cent, extended and adapted topics to suit their home environment. Table 15 shows that a further 14 parents 29.8 per cent, indicated that they adapted program topics to fit their own teaching styles. However, there were six parents who maintained that they always presented the program as per the written materials without any variation, extension or adaptation to suit their own situation.

Table 15: Parents' Rationale for Extending Topics

Type of Adaptation	Number	Per cent
No adaptation	6	12.8
To fit home environment	21	44.6
To fit parents' teaching style	14	29.8
To fit child's individual needs	6	12.8
Total	47	100.0

This inflexible attitude to teaching the pre-school correspondence activities is not in line with the unit's policy which advocates that parents select and adapt the program content according to their own child's individual needs.

Parents' self-reports also indicated a range of responses in relation to teaching new concepts to their children. (See Table 16). It should be noted, however, that in the second phase of this study video recordings were made of parents working with unfamiliar tasks and that the analysis of these data will highlight further aspects of this matter. (Grant, Ashby, Clemesha, 1978).

Table 16: Ability to Present Child with New Concepts

Level of Difficulty	Number	Per cent
No difficulty	31	66.0
Difficult – attribute to child	9	19.1
Difficult – attribute of parent, resources	7	14.9
Total	47	100.0

For the present it should be noted that Table 16 shows that approximately one-third of all parents in the sample experienced difficulty with the teaching of new concepts. Nine such parents suggested that the difficulties stemmed from the child (e.g., the child was too young to learn the concept). The remaining seven parents reported difficulties attributed directly to their own lack of teaching skills or to the absence of suitable materials to support teaching.

When asked what they did if their child had difficulty with a concept 19 parents indicated courses of action set out in Table 17.

Table 17: Parents' Action if Child has Difficulty with a Concept

Action	Number	Per cent
Discontinues presentation	2	10.5
Reiterates explanation with relevant examples	8	42.1
Refers child to other e.g. father, teacher	3	15.8
Discontinue and introduce later	6	31.6
Total	19	100.0

Two said they ceased teaching the concept without any intention of reintroducing it. Eight parents, making up the largest single group, reiterated their explanation to the child together with relevant examples aimed at overcoming the difficulty. The remainder either referred the child to another person for explanation or planned to reintroduce the concept when the child was a little older.

As teachers differ in their styles and teaching techniques so do parents. No attempt will be made within this present report to categorise or describe these variations in parents' teaching styles. Rather, it is proposed to delay such categorisation until the report dealing with the analysis of the video data. (Grant, Ashby, Clemesha, 1978). Suffice it to say at this stage that certain qualities might be identified which affect teaching and which are also correlated with certain parental background variables. The most important of these appear to be prior education and occupation.

Expectations for Children and Selected Parent Behaviours

Just as levels of parent self-confidence may reasonably be expected to influence home teaching so too may the kinds of expectations and practices of parents. Although this is a much more difficult area to assess, a series of questions in the interview were directed towards exploring at least those areas that have been picked out in the literature as worthy of further investigation.

PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN

Parents were asked to indicate the main expectations they held for their children by way of open-ended questioning. The initial data arising from this item are set out in Table 18.

Table 18: Parents' Goals for Children

Type of Goals	Number	Per cent
Humanistic	8	17.0
Educational	9	19.2
Personal	21	44.6
Societal	9	19.2
Total	47	100.0

Twenty-one parents, 44.6 per cent, indicated espoused goals for which their children can be described as personal worth or personal development. Such responses included, for example, statements relating to personal happiness and that the child enjoys life. The remaining responses were fairly evenly distributed between three other categories, labelled humanistic, educational and societal.

These latter terms are not used in any technical sense. Rather the terms are employed simply to describe the sense of the goals stated by parents. Thus, for example, the hope that the child would be a truthful and honest person is an example of a humanistic goal. Emphasis on the child completing training for a career is labelled educational. Parents' expectation that their children conform and contribute to society is categorised as a societal goal. Table 19 shows parents' judgements concerning the readiness of children to accomplish these goals.

Table 19: Readiness of Child to Accomplish Goal

Readiness of Child	Number	Per cent
Ready now	39	83.0
Ready to be introduced in stages	7	14.9
Ready for part, not others	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

By far the great majority of 39 parents, 83 per cent, judged their child as already being ready to accomplish the goal parents had for them, while the remainder planned to introduce the goals to children gradually and in easy stages.

Most parents, 63.8 per cent, expected their children to do very well at school both academically and socially. Table 20 shows the number of parents who were more reserved about their expectations being fulfilled and those who foresaw problems.

Table 20: Parental Expectation of Child's School Success

Expectation	Number	Per cent
Child will do very well	30	63.8
Child will be average	12	25.5
Child may not cope as slow, deaf	2	4.3
Child may have problem e.g. temper, dislikes routine	3	6.4
Total	47	100.0

Although only five parents believed their children's problems would affect their performance at school, there were 37 parents 78.7 per cent, who said they were concerned about their children.

Table 21: Causes of Parental Concern for Children

Causes of Concern	Number	Per cent
None	10	21.3
Episodes of children's behaviour	27	57.4
Child's physical disabilities	2	4.3
Uncertain of child's future success e.g. school	5	10.6
Child's lack of playmates	3	6.4
Total	47	100.0

Of this group, the majority, 57.4 per cent, referred to episodes of children's behaviour that concerned them. Fortunately, most of these episodes could be regarded as reasonably normal transgressions by young children e.g., telling lies, disobedient at times to parents, or being aggressive. The remaining categories are relatively more serious causes of concern. Physical disabilities such as those of a deaf child and a retarded child in the program or the total lack of playmates fall into such categories.

ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES WHICH AFFECT THE CHILDREN

Family Reading Habits

The type and frequency of mothers' and fathers' reading habits were examined in order to establish its influence, if any, upon children's learning experiences. Tables 22 and 23 reveal how often both mothers and fathers of the children read the following: newspapers, magazines, novels, topics of interest, religious material, study books and journals.

Table 22: Type and Frequency of Mothers' Reading

Article	Frequency of Reading											
	Daily		Every two or three days		Weekly		Less than Weekly		Seldom Never		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Newspapers	23	48.9	5	10.6	10	21.3	0	0	9	19.2	47	100.0
Magazines	2	4.3	3	6.4	15	31.9	12	25.5	15	31.9	47	100.0
Novels	3	6.4	4	8.5	4	8.5	10	21.3	26	55.3	47	100.0
Topics of Interest	1	2.1	2	4.3	3	6.4	10	21.3	31	65.9	47	100.0
Religious Material	4	8.5	2	4.3	0	0	0	0	41	87.2	47	100.0
Study books, journals	0	0	0	0	3	6.4	2	4.3	42	89.3	47	100.0

Table 23: Type and Frequency of Fathers' Reading

Article	Frequency of Reading											
	Daily		Every two or three days		Weekly		Less than Weekly		Seldom Never		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Newspapers	26	55.3	6	12.8	10	21.3	1	2.1	4	8.5	47	100.0
Magazines	2	4.3	3	6.4	14	29.8	7	14.9	21	44.6	47	100.0
Novels	2	4.3	3	6.4	1	2.1	4	8.5	37	78.7	47	100.0
Topic of Interest	3	6.4	1	2.1	4	8.5	14	29.8	25	53.2	47	100.0
Religious Material	3	6.4	3	6.4	0	0	2	4.3	39	82.9	47	100.0
Study books, journals	1	2.1	2	4.3	2	4.3	3	6.4	39	82.9	47	100.0

Reference to the above tables indicates that the only materials read every day by a majority of parents are newspapers, which are read by 55.3 per cent of fathers. Less than 50 per cent of mothers read the newspaper everyday but 59.5 per cent read one at least every two or three days.

The next most widely referred to materials are magazines. Twenty mothers, 42.6 per cent, and 19 fathers, 40.5 per cent, indicated that they read a magazine at least once a week.

Comparison of the daily to weekly patterns for mothers and fathers does not reveal any striking differences with respect to distributions. Both mothers and fathers are in fact quite similar in most respects. However, if attention is directed to comparison of the

"seldom/never" column then divergences appear between mothers and fathers. Indeed, comparison of the frequencies in this column indicates that there is a difference between the popularity of novels and magazines and all other types of reading matter.

Table 24: Comparison of Frequencies in the Seldom/Never Category

Type of Reading Material	Father		Mother		Total Number Of Occasions	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Magazines; Novels	58	17.6	41	12.4	99	30.0
Newspapers; Topic of Interest; Religious Material; Study Books, Journals	107	32.6	123	37.4	230	70.0
Totals	165	50.2	164	49.8	329	100.0

χ^2 (1) = 4.03 $p < .05$

Mothers read novels and magazines on far more occasions than fathers. Conversely, fathers read other reading matter such as newspapers, religious materials and journals on far more occasions than mothers. These relationships were found to be related at the .05 level of significance as indicated by the result of a chi-square test on the two variables.

The frequencies for reading each type of material were compared to a number of other variables. Table 25 shows that parents varied, as measured by the number of articles read, as to the frequency of their reading of articles. In addition there was a relationship between the number of articles read by one parent with the number read by the other marriage partner.

Table 25: Parents' Reading Habits

Number of Occasions Articles Are Read in One Week	No. of Parents	% of Parents
Up to 5	7	14.9
5.5 to 10.5	9	19.2
11 to 16	12	25.5
16.5 to 21.5	14	29.8
22 or over	5	10.6
Total	47	100.0

From the above information it was found that the 47 mothers read an article of some kind on a total of 314 occasions in a week. Mothers therefore read on an average of 6.7 occasions in one week while fathers read on average 7.3 occasions in any one week, the total number of occasions on which all 47 fathers read in one week being 342.5. Mothers and fathers did not differ significantly in terms of the most and least number of occasions on which they read. The greatest number of occasions on which a mother or father read was 21 times in one week. The least number of occasions per week that reading was undertaken was once for mothers and slightly less for fathers.

Comparable numbers of mothers and fathers were found at each reading level i.e., equal numbers were found to read on five, ten, fifteen and twenty occasions in a week showing no significant difference between males and females. In some cases within the same family there was a mother who read on a large number of occasions while the husband read on very few occasions. But there was also approximately the same number of families with the alternative situation i.e., where the father read on a high number of occasions while the wife read on only a few occasions thus showing no significant difference.

Reading Stories to Children

Table 26: Frequency Child is Read Stories

How often Mother Reads to Child

Reader	Frequency of Reading											
	Daily		Every two or three days		Weekly		Less than Weekly		Seldom Never		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mother	28	59.6	12	25.5	4	8.5	1	2.1	2	4.3	47	100.0
Father	11	23.4	6	12.8	6	12.8	10	21.2	14	29.8	47	100.0
Sibling	4	8.5	12	25.5	6	12.8	3	6.4	22	46.8	47	100.0
Other relation	3	6.4	0	0	1	2.1	4	8.5	39	83.0	47	100.0

The reading of stories to the young child is generally regarded as a desirable activity. The P.S.C.P. places considerable importance upon story reading as a language learning experience.

Table 26 indicates that over half the mothers, 59.6 per cent, read to their children daily while only approximately one quarter, 23.4 per cent, of the fathers did so. However, only two mothers, 4.3 per cent but 14 fathers, 29.8 per cent, seldom or never read to their children. Siblings or other relatives living in the family read occasionally to the pre-school child.

Table 27: Sex of Child by How Often Mother Read to Child

	Sex of Child					
	Male		Female		Totals	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
More often than twice per week	27	57.4	13	27.7	40	85.1
Less than or equal to one per week	2	4.3	5	10.6	7	14.9
Totals	29	61.7	18	38.3	47	100.0

$\chi^2(1) = 3.822$ $p < .05$

The relationship between the sex of the child being read to and sex of readers yielded one significant relationship. Table 27 shows data for the frequency of mothers reading stories as compared with the sex of the child. The relationship was significant at the .05 level of significance and showed that as a group mothers of male pre-school children read to them more often than did mothers of female pre-school children. This finding is relevant only to families enrolled in the Pre-School Correspondence Program and most specifically to those residing in the Brisbane Moreton Region.

Mealtime Conversation

Another family practice which was explored for its influences in relation to home teaching was the degree of family interaction and communication at mealtimes. Questions about this topic were asked in reference to the families' last breakfast meal, i.e., the breakfast occurring on the same day as the visit to families by the interviewer.

Table 28 shows which family members were present for breakfast at the same time as the pre-school child on this occasion.

Table 28: Childs' Breakfast Company

Persons Present	Number	Per cent
child on own	3	6.4
child and sibling	11	23.4
child and sibling and mother	8	17.0
child and sibling and father	3	6.4
whole family	22	46.8
Total	47	100.0

Table 28 indicates that although 22 families were in the habit of breakfasting together, the majority utilised a variety of routines. Eleven pre-school children ate breakfast in the company of a sibling while others ate either with one or the other parent and the siblings. Most pre-school children, 91.5 per cent, were able to talk at will during the meal but there were exceptions. In fact four parents said they tried to keep their child quiet during mealtimes.

The content of family mealtime conversations was able to be categorised into three broad types. These consist of directive speech (e.g., "Hurry up and eat your breakfast"), general conversations on family routines ("What is to be done on the farm today?") and topics of current affairs or interest (e.g., "What events were run in the Olympic games so far?"). Table 29 shows the distribution of the different types of conversation engaged in by each member of the families.

Table 29: Family Mealtime Conversation

Speaker	Content of Communication							
	Directive		Conversation Family Routine		Current Affairs		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mother	6	22.2	19	70.4	2	7.4	27	100.0
Father	1	5.6	17	94.4	0	0.0	18	100.0
Siblings	1	3.1	30	93.8	1	3.1	32	100.0
Pre-School Child	0	0.0	30	100.0	0	0.0	30	100.0

It was found that the pre-school children spoke more than other members at mealtime. However, this may be influenced by the fact that comments were limited to those family members who ate with the pre-school child.

Mothers engaged in directive communication for 22.2 per cent of their conversation. An example would be "Hurry up and eat your breakfast!" or "Use your cutlery properly". This type of conversation was much more frequently used by mothers than other members. Mothers lowest percentage of conversation was about family routines, whereas 100 per cent of the pre-school child's conversation dealt with general family tasks and happenings.

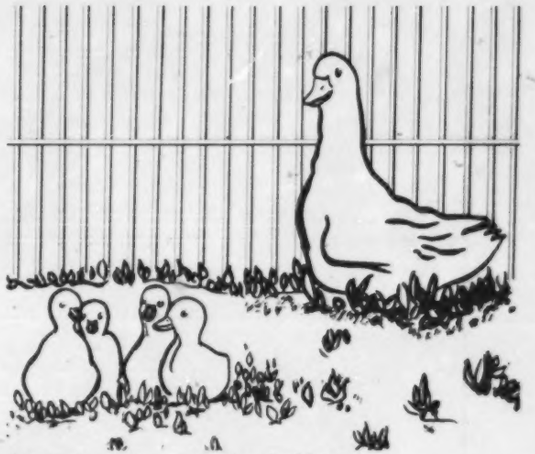
Methods of Discipline

In most families either parent disciplined the children. Whichever parent was present when the child misbehaved, acted as the disciplinarian. This was the practice adopted by three-quarters of all families. Quite a different arrangement was made by eight other families. In five instances only the mother disciplined the children, while in the remaining three only the father did so. The remaining two families said there was usually no need for disciplinarian measures to be used with their children.

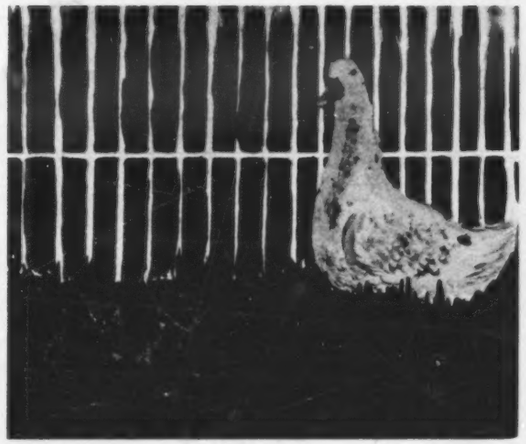
Parents also differed in their methods of showing approval and disapproval to their children. Verbal praise and verbal disapproval were expressed by 55.3 and 53.2 per cent of families respectively. However, physical praise such as hugging or kissing the child, used by 27.7 per cent while physical disapproval such as smacking, was used by 44.7 per cent.

ILLUSTRATIONS SHOWN TO CHILDREN

1. Photograph – black and white print of no. 3



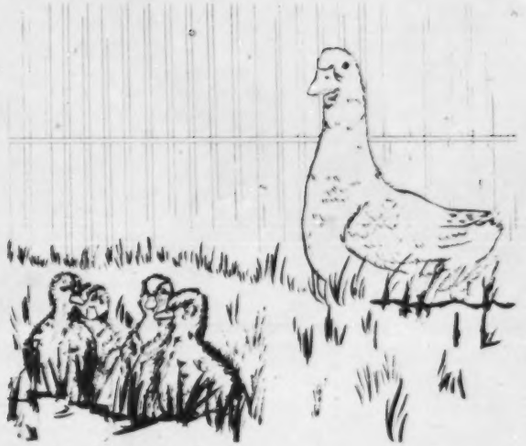
2. Drawing – line – black and white



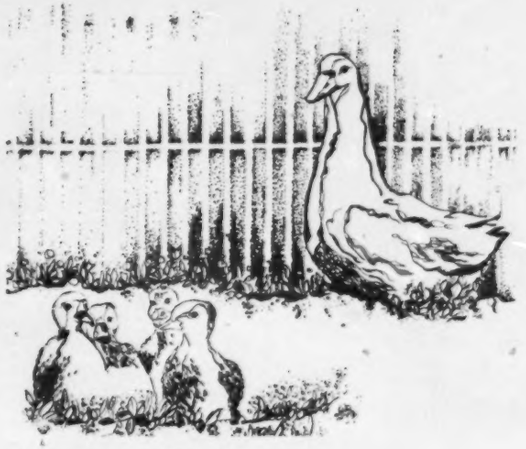
5. Drawing – full colour

6. Photograph – posterisation

3. Photograph – full colour



4. Drawing – decorative



7. Drawing – stylised

These photographs represent the range of illustrations shown to children in order to assess their preferences.

Table 30: Method of Approval Used

Reward Given	Number	Per cent
Verbal	26	55.3
Material	3	6.4
Attention	5	10.6
Physical	13	27.7
Total	47	100.0

Table 30 shows that methods other than verbal and physical were used by eight parents, 17 per cent, to show approval. An example of a non-verbal and non-physical display of approval would be giving attention to the child or the giving of a material reward such as a biscuit or a sweet.

Table 31: Method of Disapproval Used

Method	Number	Per cent
Praise when good	1	2.1
Explain why something is bad	25	53.2
Express disapproval physically or positively e.g. denial of privilege	21	44.7
Total	47	100.0

In the case of showing disapproval, parents as a group were equally divided as to showing their feelings verbally or physically, to the children.

Reactions to Children's Behaviour

Parents were asked to react to a number of features that frequently accompany children's activities when at play. First, they were asked what they thought of such features and behaviours as dirt, noise and the side effects of each. Second, they were asked what action they took when they occurred.

Table 32 presents parents' reactions to the above ranked from the least serious to the most serious.

Table 32: Parental Reaction to Children's Behaviour

Incident Involving Child	Parental Reaction							
	Unperturbed		Intensely Disliked		Never Occurs		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Noisiness	41	87.2	6	12.8	0	0	47	100
Dirtiness	40	85.1	7	14.9	0	0	47	100
Disagreements	32	68.1	8	17	7	14.9	47	100
Untidiness	27	57.4	20	42.6	0	0	47	100
Cheekiness	11	23.4	22	46.8	14	29.8	47	100
Selfishness	16	34.1	23	48.9	8	17	47	100
Disobedience	0	0	38	80.9	9	19.1	47	100

Most parents were not disturbed by noise which accompanied play or by the fact that children got dirty while playing. Nor did many parents worry about disagreements which occurred between children in the progress of play.

In each of the above cases, less than 17 per cent said they intensely disliked the behaviour. However, there was a marked increase in the percentages of parents who intensely dislike other features of play such as untidiness or behaviours such as cheekiness and selfishness. In each case, 40 to 50 per cent of parents were adament about their dislike of such incidents. The only aspect which was intensely disliked by more than 50 per cent of parents was the instance of a child disobeying his/her parent. A high 80.9 per cent, 38 parents, disliked a child who exhibited disobedience. The remaining nine parents said their child was never disobedient. No one however, said that when disobedience occurred they were unperturbed by it.

Table 33 shows the type of actions taken, if any, by parents concerning the incidents which arise when children are playing.

Table 33: Parental Action Taken About Children's Behaviour

Incident Involving Child	Parental Action Taken									
	None		Discuss Incident With Child		Act to Help Child		Punish Physical		Totals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Noisiness	14	29.8	26	55.3	1	2.1	6	12.8	47	100
Dirtiness	3	6.4	4	8.5	39	83.0	1	2.1	47	100
Disagreements	27	57.4	14	29.8	0	0	6	12.8	47	100
Untidiness	5	10.6	26	55.3	10	21.3	6	12.8	47	100
Cheekiness	12	25.5	13	27.7	0	0	22	46.8	47	100
Selfishness	8	17.0	25	53.2	0	0	14	29.8	47	100
Disobedience	5	10.6	11	23.4	0	0	31	66.0	47	100

Just as parents reactions to aspects of play varied with the seriousness they assigned to each, so too do the actions they take. Where the aspect concerned was judged by most parents as not being very serious, parents were inclined to either take no action, discuss the topic or as in the case of children who get dirty – simply proceed to help the child remedy the situation.

In the case of noisiness, most parents, 55.3 per cent, simply talked to the child and requested that the noise level be lowered. Only six parents actually took steps to physically restrict or punish the child for noise. With the more serious incidents of cheekiness, selfishness and disobedience, the frequency of parents who said they would take positive, physical actions increased sharply. The number who would take positive steps to punish children rose from 14, through 22 to 31 in reaction to selfishness, cheekiness and disobedience, respectively. It is also noteworthy that transgressions which involved the child directly affecting the parent were more likely to receive strong physical punishment than those which only influenced either the children themselves or their playmates. When there was a disagreement between children 27 parents took no action, 14 discussed the incident with the child but only six, 12.8 per cent, took positive steps to punish them.

RESOURCE MATERIAL PREFERENCES

Value of Play and Play Materials

Of the 47 parents interviewed 43, 91.5 per cent, believed that children gained in some way from being able to engage in some solitary play. Only 28 of these parents were able to identify the type of value which they believed their child gained from solitary play. Ten said it enabled the child to test the practical application of concepts already learnt while the remaining 18 believed it helped the children to develop their concentration and problem solving skills.

Parents were also asked what play materials they judged to be of most benefit to their children. The range of play materials mentioned are set out in Table 34.

Table 34: Play Materials Found Most Beneficial

Play Material	Number	Per cent
Simple construction material – junk, clay, paper	15	31.9
Basic environmental materials – dirt, water, stones	8	17.0
Toys – truck, doll, tea set, bike, lego	14	29.7
Reading and writing materials – books, paint	6	12.8
Animals and pets	2	4.3
Most things are assets	2	4.3
Total	47	100.0

The largest single group of 15 parents, 31.9 per cent, found that simple construction materials such as old cartons and used plastic containers, clay and paper were an asset to their children. A further 14 parents found their children gained most from their commercial toys such as trucks, dolls, tea sets, bikes and lego sets to name but a few. Other valued play materials are itemised in Table 34.

It should be noted in this particular item parents' belief that their children "gained" from the use of certain materials may in fact be no more than observations of the kinds of materials that are either provided for the children or are prepared for the children.

Children's Choice of Illustration

Invariably it is adults who design the illustrations for children's reading materials. It was decided to assess pre-school children's preferences for different styles of illustration so that future illustrations in the P.S.C.P. could be designed in line with children's preferred styles of drawings. An artist was commissioned to prepare a set of picture materials. The picture content was to remain constant but each one to be of a different illustrative style (see Centre Plate).

The picture content was a family of ducks and ducklings set in a green pasture. This content was presented in seven forms:

Full colour photograph;
Black and white photograph;
Posterised photograph;
Full colour drawing;
Black and white line drawing;
Stylised drawing; and
Decorative drawing.

The most popular type of illustration among the pre-school children tested, was the full colour drawing which was the first choice of 22 children, 46.8 per cent. The next most popular form of illustration chosen by 17 children, 36.1 per cent, was the full colour photograph. Colour was one of the attributes first selected by 82.9 per cent of the children. The frequency distribution of other selections can be seen in Table 35.

Table 35: Children's First Choice Of Illustration

Style of Illustration	Number	Per cent
Photograph – full colour	17	36.1
Photograph – black & white	2	4.3
Photograph – posterisation	2	4.3
Drawing – full colour	22	46.8
Drawing – line, black & white	1	2.1
Drawing – stylised	2	4.3
Drawing – decorative	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

A rank ordering of children's first two preferences of illustration is included in Table 36. Of the 22 children who chose the colour drawing as their first preference of illustration, 12, 54.5 per cent, selected the colour photograph as their second choice. It was also found that of the 17 who chose the colour photograph first, 8, 47 per cent, named the colour drawing as their second preference.

Table 36: Rank Order of Children's First Two Preferences of Illustration

Type of Illustration	Number of children
Photograph – full colour Drawing – full colour	20
Photograph – full colour Photograph – posterisation	4
Drawing – full colour Photograph – posterisation	4
Photograph – full colour Photograph – black and white	4
Drawing – full colour Photograph – black and white	4
Drawing – full colour Drawing – decorative	3
Photograph – full colour Drawing – stylised	2
Drawing – full colour Drawing – stylised	2
Photograph – black and white Photograph – posterisation	1
Photograph – black and white Drawing – line, black and white	1
Photograph – posterisation Drawing – decorative	1
Drawing – full colour Drawing – line, black and white	1
All other 9 possible combinations	0
Total	47

Clearly, colour was the most popular aspect of the illustration to children as all other elements of the illustrations were kept constant including content and size.

Parents' Choice of Extra Materials and Preferred Medium

As part of the developing services attached to the P.S.C.P., both parents' and children's libraries were being planned to supplement the program materials available to enrolled families. It was therefore decided to commission samples to be made of the different types of resource materials which could feasibly be available in such a library.

A series of questions was asked to establish the areas of the program in which parents believed they could well use extra teaching aides. They were also asked the medium in which they would prefer such materials to be. Table 37 displays parents' first choice of the areas they would most like the materials to cover.

Table 37: Parents' First Choice of Material Area

Topic Chosen	Number	Per cent
Child Development	3	6.4
Cognitive Development of Child	27	57.4
Activity Development	9	19.2
Practical Equipment	6	12.8
All equal	1	2.1
Missing	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

It was found that a majority of 27 parents, 57.4 per cent, desired additional teaching materials relevant to the cognitive development of their pre-school child. Any material which was of interest to the child and furthered their knowledge of a particular topic was regarded as material which would aid the child's cognitive development.

Other areas for which parents required aid were child development – information for parents on the normal expected performance levels of children at different ages; activity development – information for parents on what activities are relevant to further explore a teaching concept with their child; and practical equipment – information for parents on how to prepare and construct practical equipment to use with their children. The frequency distribution of parents' choices can be seen in the above table.

The type of medium which parents preferred such materials to be in is shown in Table 38.

Table 38: Parents' First Preferred Medium for Materials

Medium	Number	Per cent
Articles	14	29.8
Slides	9	19.2
Tape	8	17.0
Letter	1	2.1
Folder of Pictures	10	21.3
Practical Materials	3	6.4
All Equal	1	2.1
Missing	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

Irrespective of the material area, it was found that the largest single number of people, 14, preferred the information to be presented in the format of an article. A further 10 parents, 21.3 per cent, asked for the materials to be presented as a folder of real life photographs for use in presenting a concept to their children. Another nine asked for a visual slide presentation of the aids.

It was decided to further investigate the relationship, if any, between parents' choice of material area and their preferred type of media for same. Table 39 presents this information.

Table 39: Parents' First Choice of Extra Materials Wanted by Parents' First Choice of Medium for Materials

Parents' 1st Choice of Medium for Materials	Parents' 1st Choice of Extra Materials Wanted: Child Development and Cognitive Development		Activity Development and Practical Equipment		Totals	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Literature	4	9.1	24	54.5	28	63.6
Visual and Practical	12	27.3	4	9.1	16	36.4
Totals	16	36.4	28	63.6	44	100.0

χ^2 (1) = 16.24 $p < .005$

The above variables were found to be statistically related at the .005 level of significance. This relationship was such that parents who required aid in the areas of child development and cognitive development desired it to be in the form of visual material or practical equipment.

Alternatively, informative literature was asked for in relation to the areas of activity development and ideas on practical equipment much more often than practical and visual materials. The reasons for parents' choice of medium varied considerably according to their familiarity with each. A sample range of each type of medium available in each material area was shown to the parents so that they could see the materials before making their choice.

Parents' reasons for their preferences were related to their perceived ability to present the media to their children and the appeal which each had for them. A group of 11 parents, 23.4 per cent, chose the folder of real life photographs because they clearly represented what it was parents would be trying to explain to their child. A real life photograph of a topic of conversation was felt to be a very appropriate method of presentation for pre-school children. A further 10 indicated that they had chosen literary information on topics that they themselves needed to gain information on. They wanted to come to understand the topic before transmitting it to the child. Reasons for other selections are presented in Table 40.

Table 40: Parents' Reason for Choice of Medium

Reason for Preference	Number	Per cent
None	11	23.4
Tapes are expedient – save time	6	12.8
Folder of real photos – clear to see what is meant	11	23.4
Slides useful as own a projector	5	10.6
Articles and books are easy to follow	10	21.3
Equipment can be used again	3	6.4
All equal	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

It is important to note that parents did not choose the above in a vacuum but in relation to a readily observable set of example materials presented to them in their home.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Intensive interviews conducted with 47 parents in the Brisbane Moreton Region enabled the accumulation of information about the families enrolled in the P.S.C.P. Certain demographic characteristics were ascertained as were some of the mothers' attitudes toward the education of their pre-school children and detail of the teaching practices adopted by parents for the tuition of their children.

In the sample of families visited there were 29 boys and 18 pre-school girls. Their ages ranged from four to six years with a concentration of 27 children, 57.5 per cent, in the four years-six months to five years age bracket. Within the families mothers were found to be a few years younger on average than their husbands and mothers had had a few more years of formal education as shown in Table 4. This would seem logical as younger generations have been increasingly encouraged to complete higher levels of formal education.

In every family, the mother was found to be the parent responsible for the administration of the child's pre-school correspondence program and was therefore the child's "parent-teacher". Certainly many fathers were actively involved with their children in a number of program activities but no father was found to be responsible for the program. The information contained in this report is therefore based on mothers' replies to questions asked.

It has previously been revealed that most unit-based teachers regarded mothers as having a teaching role in the program. (Grant, Ashby, Clemesha, 1978). Less than half the mothers however saw themselves as having the role of 'teacher'. Not as many mothers show confidence in their teaching abilities as teachers do for mothers. Mothers' confidence level was found to be related to the type of occupation she had previously held. A larger percentage of mothers who had held skilled or professional positions were confident of their teaching abilities than those mothers who had held semi-skilled or unskilled occupations. Their confidence was also found to relate to parents' choice of extra teaching materials.

A significantly larger percentage of mothers who were confident in their teaching ability chose extra teaching materials in the areas of activity development than mothers who were not confident.

Some parents had found that their involvement in certain types of community organisations or with certain people, had influenced their teaching style. The facility most used by families were the local schools. Twenty-three parents, 49 per cent, indicated that they were involved with schools in some way. Parents' involvement in community facilities sometimes influenced their teaching in that they gained ideas for activities and were able to solve some problems through discussion with other adults at the meetings. The particular benefits accrued from involvement in each type of facility and from association with particular people are discussed in reference to Table 12.

Once parents became involved in the teaching of their children most found that positive benefits resulted. Many found that they were able to individualise the program because of their intimate knowledge of their child's abilities, likes and dislikes. They were able to draw upon seemingly endless home situations for examples of concepts and could slot in these activities with or between routine home duties. This adaptation of the content and presentation of the program is in line with the correspondence unit's policy. There are however a number of parents who have difficulties teaching the program and seem unable to adapt it to their children's needs.

About five parents, 10.6 per cent, did not think the roles of "teacher" and "parent" were a successful combination. Almost 60 per cent of mothers read one or more stories to their pre-school children every day. Mothers were found to read more often to their male pre-school children than to their female pre-school children.

The type of discipline enforced with children varied with parents' judgements of the severity of the misdemeanor. The most usual arrangement was that whichever parent was present when the child needed correction, would act as disciplinarian. Transgressions which involved the child directly affecting the parent were more likely to receive strong physical punishment than those which only influenced children themselves or their playmates. In the later situation parents were more likely to show their disapproval verbally than physically.

Parents indicated that they would benefit from extra teaching aids. The majority indicated the need for such aids in the area of the cognitive development of their pre-school child. Most who wanted more aids in this area desired them to be in the form of visual material such as real life photographs, or practical equipment for use with the children. The type of illustrative materials found to have most appeal for children were full colour drawings.

Making allowances for the differences of parents and the variations of their methods, most parents appeared to enjoy the experience of being their own child's parent-teacher and to accomplish the task commendably.

Generally parents are performing the role of teacher to their own pre-school child and obtaining a degree of satisfaction from their involvement ir the teaching of their children. This is not to say that a substantial proportion do not have serious reservations about their competence to do so.

Close attention needs to be paid to the preferences contained herein from parents for extra teaching aids. Further attention also needs to be directed to an in-depth analysis of the range of parents' teaching styles.

APPENDIX I
Parent Interview

CONFIDENTIAL

Child's Sex:

Male		1–4
Female		5

Child's age in months: _____ 6–7

Number of children in the family: _____ 8–9

Position of child in the family: _____ 10–11

Age of mother: _____ 12–13

Last completed grade of education: _____ 14–15

Present occupation: _____ 16–18

Occupation before marriage: _____ 19–21

Age of father: _____ 22–23

Last completed grade of education: _____ 24–25

Occupation: _____ 26–28

Other language spoken in the home

No		29

Did either parent receive a correspondence education?

If yes, how many years of correspondence did each receive?

Parent	Number of Years	
Mother		30–31
Father		

Are there any other adults living in the family home?

If yes, what is their relationship to the pre-school child?

_____ 32

What part do you feel you play in your child's correspondence program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____ 33

What part do you think the teacher expects you to play in the program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____ 34

Do you feel confident in your ability to teach your child?

_____

_____ 35

In which ways do you feel that you, as a parent-teacher, can cater for the needs of your child?

_____

_____

_____

_____ 36

In which ways do you feel the correspondence teacher can cater for the needs of your child?

_____

_____

_____

_____ 37

Are any of these facilities in your area?

If yes, are you able to make use of any of them?

Type of Centre	Not in area	Yes Used	Yes Not Used
Pre-School			
Kindergarten			
Play group			
Library			
School			
Other (please specify)			

38
39
40
41
42
43

Do you feel your contact with any of the above centres has had an influence on the way you teach your child?

Pre-School: _____

_____ 44

Kindergarten: _____

_____ 45

Playgroups: _____

_____ 46

Library: _____

_____ 47

School: _____

_____ 48

Any other influence you can identify: _____

_____ 49

When you think of ways to extend or develop topics in the program, how do you proceed?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____ 50

Do you find yourself teaching topics in the program incidentally (as they come up) or do you plan in advance what you are going to teach your child?

Incidentally	
Planned	
Other (specify)	

51

Other: _____

_____

_____

Do you find it difficult to present new ideas to your child? (That is ideas that are new to him).
If yes why?

No difficulty	
Child too young to understand	
Lack of suitable teaching aids	
Parent unable to find "just the right words"	
Other	

52

Other (specify): _____

_____

How do you usually overcome this?

_____

_____

_____

_____ 53

What things do you think it is most important for your child to know?

_____

_____

_____

_____ 54

Do you think your child is old enough to learn these now?

_____

_____

_____

_____ 55

What things about your child concerns you most?

56–57

What policy do you and your husband have for disciplining your child?

(Prompt if necessary) e.g. Do you have total responsibility for discipline.

Do you have responsibility for discipline except in serious matters? Does father have total responsibility for discipline? Do you share the responsibility?

58

Preface next Section

"Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about the things you like to read."

What do you read? How often do you read these?

Article	Daily	Every few Days	Weekly	Less than Weekly	Seldom	
						59
						60
						61
						62
						63
						64

What does your husband read? How often does he read each of these?

Article	Daily	Every few Days	Weekly	Less than Weekly	Seldom	
						65
						66
						67
						68
						69
						70

How often do you, or does someone else, read to your pre-school child?

	Daily	Every few Days	Weekly	Less than Weekly	Seldom	
Mother						71
Father						72
Sibling						73
Other—please specify						74

Does your child talk during family mealtimes?

Yes		
No		
Only when spoken to		75
Other		

This morning who ate breakfast with your child?

No one		
Mother		76
Father		
Sibling		
Other		

If the answer isn't "no one". Did they talk to each other during the meal?

May I ask what it was they talked about?

Mother: _____

_____ 77

Father: _____

_____ 78

Sibling: _____

_____ 79

Other: _____

_____ 1–4

Do you think children can learn anything while playing by themselves?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____ 5

The following things often happen when children play.

A. What do you think about them?

B. What do you do about them? (Ask individually).

Noise A: _____ 6

Noise B: _____ 7

Dirt A: _____ 8

Dirt B: _____ 9

Untidiness A: _____ 10

Untidiness B: _____ 11

Incidents of the following nature may also occur during play. Again –

A. What do you think about them?

B. What do you do about them?

A. Selfishness: _____ 12

B. Selfishness: _____ 13

A. Disagreements: _____ 14

B. Disagreements: _____ 15

A. Disobedience: _____ 16

B. Disobedience: _____ 17

A. Cheekiness: _____ 18

B. Cheekiness: _____ 19

Do you show your child you approve of his behaviour?

_____

_____

_____

_____ 20

How do you show your child you approve of his behaviour?

_____

_____

_____

_____ 21

Do you show your child you disapprove of his behaviour?

_____

_____ 22

How do you show your child you disapprove of his behaviour?

_____

_____ 23

What sort of play materials have been of most benefit to your child?

_____

_____

_____

_____ 24

How do you think your child will achieve in a school situation?

_____

_____

_____

_____ 25

Any other comments? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____ 26–27

Children's Preferences for Illustrated Materials

Age: _____ 28–29

Sex: _____ 30

Type of Illustration	Order of Preference			
	1st	2nd	3rd	
1. Photograph – full colour				
2. Photograph – black and white				31
3. Photograph – posterisation				
4. Drawing – full colour				32
5. Drawing – line – black and white				
6. Drawing – stylised				33
7. Drawing – decorative				

Parent Preference for Additional Materials

Sex: _____ 34

Category 1. Child Development
2. Cognitive Development (of child)
3. Activity Development
4. Practical Equipment
5. Two or more
6. All equal

Order of Preference		
1st Choice	2nd Choice	Other

35
36
37

Medium
a. articles
b. slides
c. tape
d. letter
e. folder
f. material – felt board

Reason for Selection: _____

_____

_____

_____ 38

Any other comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____ 39–40

APPENDIX II
Supplementary Tables

Table 1: Distribution of Number of Children in Families

Number of Children	Number	Per cent
One	1	2.1
Two	24	51.1
Three	9	19.2
Four	8	17.0
Five	5	10.6
Total	47	100.0

Table 2: Birth Order of Pre-School Child

Birth Order	Number	Per cent
First	19	40.4
Second	13	27.7
Third	8	17.0
Fourth	6	12.8
Fifth	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

Table 3: Other Adults Living in Home

Relationship to Child	Number	Per cent
None	43	91.5
Grandmother	2	4.3
Grandparents	1	2.1
Boarder	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

Table 4: Languages Spoken by Parents

Language	Number	Per cent
English Only	46	97.9
English and Dutch	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

Table 5: Pre-School Influence on Mothers' Teaching

Influence	Number	Per cent
None	44	93.6
Ideas for Activities	2	4.3
Set realistic expectations of child	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

Table 6: Kindergarten Influence on Mothers' Teaching

Influence	Number	Per cent
None	43	91.5
Ideas for Activities	3	6.4
Sets realistic expectations of child	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

Table 7: Library's Influence on Mothers' Teaching

Influence	Number	Per cent
None	38	80.8
Read about child rearing	2	4.3
To interest child in reading books	6	12.8
Source of factual materials	1	2.1
Total	47	100.0

Table 8: Children's Second Choice of Illustration

Style of Illustration	Number	Per cent
Photograph – full colour	13	27.7
Photograph – black and white	8	17.0
Photograph – posterisation	8	17.0
Drawing – full colour	12	25.5
Drawing – line, black and white	1	2.1
Drawing – stylised	2	4.3
Drawing – decorative	3	6.4
Total	47	100.0

Table 9: Children's Third Choice of Illustration

Style of Illustration	Number	Per cent
Photograph – full colour	6	12.8
Photograph – black and white	18	38.2
Photograph – posterisation	7	14.9
Drawing – full colour	5	10.6
Drawing – line, black and white	3	6.4
Drawing – stylised	6	4.3
Drawing – decorative	2	4.3
Total	47	100.0

Table 10: Parents' Second Choice of Material Area

Topic Chosen	Number	Per cent
Child Development	3	6.4
Resource Materials for Child	6	12.8
Activity Development	6	12.8
Practical Equipment	4	8.5
Missing	28	59.5
Total	47	100.0

Table 11: Parents' Third Choice of Material Area

Topic Chosen	Number	Per cent
Child Development	1	2.1
Practical Equipment	3	6.4
Missing	43	91.5
Total	47	100.0

Table 12: Parents' Second Preferred Medium for Materials

Medium	Number	Per cent
Articles	10	21.3
Slides	6	12.8
Tape	15	31.9
Letter	1	2.1
Folder of Pictures	7	14.9
Practical Materials	4	8.5
All Equal	1	2.1
Missing	3	6.4
Total	47	100.0

Table 13: Parents' Third Preferred Medium for Materials

Medium	Number	Per cent
Articles	4	8.5
Slides	6	12.8
Tape	5	10.6
Letter	1	2.1
Folder of Pictures	2	4.3
All Equal	1	2.1
Missing	28	59.6
Total	47	100.0

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